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Annapolis visitors step back in time with Maryland Day activities

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Eight people ducked into one of the rooms of 19 Maryland Ave., to get out of the rain on Friday - and entered the year 1906. advertisement

Carole McCullough, who is ordinarily a docent at the Hammond-Harwood House, was representing the "Savings Bank" that was charged with leasing the facility.

She greeted the guests as she would potential tenants before taking them on a tour of the property.

"Hester Harwood has placed an ad in the paper to rent out six rooms in the house," McCullough said.

The ad read: "Six rooms with standing furniture in the main part of house No. 19 Maryland Ave., Annapolis for terms particular apply to James M. Munroe Savings Bank Building."

The Hammond-Harwood House is one of the finest Colonial houses in Annapolis' historic district, built in 1774. Today it's a museum.

The 30-minute tours were one of several activities taking place in Annapolis Friday, kicking off Maryland Day festivities. The inspiration for the tour was that small ad discovered in archives of the *Maryland Gazette* from 1906.

It's the seventh year of Maryland Day festivities sponsored by the Four Rivers Heritage Area. Tours, exhibits and special events will run through Sunday. Many of the activities are free or cost \$1.

Maryland Day commemorates the founding of the Maryland colony when arriving settlers celebrated a Mass of thanksgiving on St. Clement's Island on March 25, 1634.

Marylanders began observing the holiday in 1903, when the state Board of Education designated it as a day devoted to studying the state's history. The General Assembly made Maryland Day an official state holiday in 1916.

Ana and David Curtis from Burlington, Ontario, Canada, were taking in the tour with their 14-year-old son Michael. The family decided to spend spring break in Washington, D.C., and made a side excursion to Annapolis.

They received a tour of the legislature earlier in the day. Ana hoped later she could catch a peek of Kevin Spacey at Red Red Wine Bar. Her favorite show is the Netflix series "House of Cards," and her previous tour guide said the actor was going to be in a restaurant downtown.

"I love it," Ana said of Annapolis. "It's quaint, and there's so much history here that you don't get in most American cities."

McCullough showed off the finery in the National Historic Landmark, replete with cabinetmaker John Shaw's furniture and Charles Willson Peale paintings. The house is so meticulously symmetrical, it contains three false doors with nothing but bricks behind them.

She showed off the pine floors and the elaborate trim decking the rooms of the house.

This wasn't just any trim - it was a status symbol.

"Instead of parking their BMW or Mercedes in the driveway, they would hire someone skilled to do the molding," she said.

Michael was impressed with the house. He considered whether he'd lease it.

"I liked it, but I would have redecorated some of the rooms," he said.

Ana was ready to sign on the dotted line to the bank, until her husband David chimed in.

"Well, we'd have to negotiate the price first," he said.

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